

Comparison of Self-Reported Substance Use and Test Results

- Of the 408 persons who tested positive for alcohol, 10% deny having used alcohol in the past 72 hours, 4% deny having used it in the past thirty days, and 1% deny ever having used it. Obviously, false under-reporting of substance use by SANTA respondents can lead to a significant under-estimate of the need for substance abuse treatment within the SANTA sample.
- A high proportion of the adult SANTA sample are under-reporting substance use. With the exception of alcohol and methadone, the proportion of those who test positive for a drug but deny any use in the past seventy-two hours varies from 44% to 100%. The proportion of those who test positive but deny any use in the past thirty days varies from 24% to 100%, and the proportion of those who test positive but deny ever using varies from 8% to 100%. Generally speaking, denial is greater for “harder” drugs.
- This finding suggests that under-reporting of substance use may lead to serious under-estimation of need for treatment among Tennessee’s arrestees unless arrestees who misreport their substance use are excluded from analysis, when need for treatment is estimated.

The Current Prevalence of Need for Substance Abuse Treatment in the Adult SANTA Sample

Need for Treatment as Measured by Diagnosed and Self-Reported Dependence

- Measures of substance abuse treatment need can be used to estimate the overall need for treatment among Tennessee’s arrestees and the most appropriate mix of treatment modalities for servicing this need.
- Overall, we found that respondents in this sample can reasonably accurately assess whether they are in need of substance abuse treatment.
- Those dependent on or abusing alcohol are less likely to perceive themselves as needing treatment than are those dependent on or abusing other substances. Denial may be a stronger factor among the former group.
- There appears to be a similar tendency to under-report marijuana dependence and abuse, again possibly as a result of denial as with alcohol.
- Viewed separately from total treatment need, forty-nine percent of adult arrestees need alcohol treatment and 39% need drug treatment.